



20 September 2018

The Honourable Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Gender Discrimination in the Banking and Finance Sector

I am writing to you in my capacity as Governor of Zonta International District 22 Ltd. For nearly 100 years Zonta International has worked to empower and improve the status of women and girls globally through service and advocacy, and this leading role is recognised by official observer status at the United Nations.

The Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry has exposed a poisonous culture within the industry requiring urgent and meaningful reform. Our organisation is particularly concerned about gender discrimination in this industry which, even in 2018, remains all too common. As gender discrimination is not directly within the terms of reference of the Royal Commission, I write to you directly on behalf of my members.

I outline below three examples from the experiences of members of the Zonta Club of Brisbane:

Example one: A female barrister jointly shared a personal bank account with her husband. Despite both being joint and equal account holders, the bank stated that its policy was for the male joint account holder to be listed as the primary account holder. To justify this extraordinarily out-dated position, the bank explained that its software system made it impossible for a female to be listed as the primary account holder, even when that was the wish of both account holders. The software reflects the discriminatory position of the bank and is no justification for the bank's policy of gender inequality.

Example two: A 36 year old divorced woman sought a bank loan to buy property. When meeting to discuss the loan, the bank's representative asked whether the woman was still ovulating. She queried the relevance of the question given she was divorced and not planning further children. She was told that the potential to have another child would affect her ability to repay the loan so that the bank would not lend her as much money. The bank's question evidences blatant gender discrimination.

Example three: A professional business woman successfully applied to her bank, where she and her husband had joint accounts, for a credit card. She was unable to activate her credit card when it arrived without her husband's permission. Her husband did not require her permission to activate his credit card.

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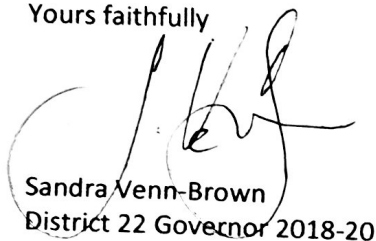
As for example one, the bank had made the male the primary account holder, this time for a credit card. - another clear example of gender discrimination.

Unfortunately, these are not isolated examples. Rather, they reflect the default position of pervasive gender discrimination permeating the banking and finance sector. This gender discrimination in the sector must not be permitted to continue.

On behalf of my members, I ask you to include **policy and legislative initiatives prohibiting gender discrimination** in the package of reform proposals crafted in response to the pending findings of the Royal Commission. Such long overdue initiatives are fair, sensible and have wide community support. I commend them to you.

I thank you for your assistance and look forward to your response. Please contact me should you or members of your staff wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours faithfully



Sandra Venn-Brown
District 22 Governor 2018-20

Prepared with the support of the Zonta Club of Brisbane Inc. Advocacy Committee
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The Hon. Richard di Natale MP, Leader of the Greens
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